

Supporting a Vital Resource in Our Community
Council President Scott Peters, First District
For the La Jolla Light, December 2006

Healthy living and advances in modern medicine allow Americans to live longer and more active lives than ever before in our history. With a growing population of older Americans, it becomes increasingly important to provide a range of services suited to their health and other needs.

For more than 30 years, the Florence Riford Senior Center in La Jolla has provided a range of life-extending services for residents of La Jolla, University City and Pacific Beach. Those services include health and wellness seminars, tax and legal advice, exercise and computer classes and other activities to care for and engage the over-50 population.

The Riford Center currently serves more than 400 members each year, ranging in age from 50 to 90-plus. Since 2004, the center's membership has grown more than 475% and that number is expected to grow significantly more in the future.

Initial funding was provided by philanthropist Florence Riford, who purchased the facility in 1972. Since that time, resources have dwindled, with the Center expected to have spent 80% of its remaining funds by 2008. Although a maintenance fund was part of Mrs. Riford's bequest, the endowment has not been able to keep up with the rising costs of operating the center. Maintenance has been deferred so that more money can be spent on programming and activities for seniors. The facility operates on a modest budget, with only two part-time and two full-time professional staffers, and a dedicated group of volunteers. To save money on operating costs, the Center closes on Fridays. Without new funding, the Center will be confronted with a severe financial crisis and a doubtful future.

We must make sure that the Riford Center continues to provide its important community services. There are a number of ways in which you can help.

The center currently seeks support for two capital improvement projects, the installation of new window coverings throughout the facility, and new outdoor awnings for the courtyard. In-kind donations are welcome as well. Requests range from the small-pencils, pens, toilet paper-to the more significant-a new color printer, large print books and chairs with wheels. Donations to any of these projects would be most welcome.

Volunteer opportunities also exist for those who are willing to share their time and talents with the Riford Center. If you can assist with light office work, donate cookies and snacks, work in the library or teach a class, please contact center director Linda Hunt at (858) 459-0831. The center also seeks a skilled craftsman who is willing to donate a small amount of time to help with minor repairs.

Please help support this much-needed community resource in any way you can.

Last month, my City Council colleagues elected me to serve a second term as Council President. It is an honor and a pleasure to serve in this role. My staff and I have worked to ensure that our focus on district issues was not diminished by our new focus on citywide business. Our record of accomplishments is a testament to the work that has been done this year in the First District.

In La Jolla, we completed road and wastewater projects, initiated utility undergrounding, and launched a community dialogue in Bird Rock about ways to improve the look and feel of that community. The City's new smoking ordinance will protect La Jolla's parks and beaches from unsightly cigarette litter. And the City entered into an agreement with Scripps Institution of Oceanography to protect the two areas of biological significance off our coastline.

During the next year, I will continue to focus on the issues which affect the lives of La Jolla residents. Please do not hesitate to call my office if you have a question about a project or a proposal to improve the quality of life in your neighborhood. You can reach La Jolla representative Chanelle Hawken at (619) 236-6611, or email us at ScottPeters@SanDiego.gov.